BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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April 20, 2000

highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Prices

- **British Columbia's all-items consumer price index rose 1.8% during the twelve-month period ending in March.** The increase in the price index, which was fuelled by higher energy costs (+23.7%), was the lowest in the country. Excluding energy costs, BC's inflation rate would have been only 0.5%. Canada's inflation rate stood at 3.0% last month, as price levels in other provinces rose at rates ranging from 2.4% in Saskatchewan and Quebec to 4.4% in Nova Scotia. Canadian prices for products other than energy were 1.4% higher than in March of 1999.

  Energy costs in the province have been rising in tandem with those in the rest of the country, but food (-1.0%) and shelter (+0.6%) prices have not. The food index was down for the third month in a row, reflecting lower prices for all products except meat (+0.9%), fish (+1.8%) and restaurant meals (+1.5%). The Canadian food index rose 0.4% during the same period.

  BC's weak housing market also helped temper the effect of high fuel costs in March. Although the shelter price index was 0.6% higher than a year ago, the cost of owned accommodation continued to fall, declining 0.9%. Prices for most other goods and services rose moderately. The transportation index, which includes gas prices, was the lone exception. It was up 7.2%, showing the effect of a 40.2% increase in the cost of gas at the pumps. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Victoria had the lowest inflation rate of any metropolitan area in Canada last month (+1.8%). Vancouver's rate was 2.2%, the same as in Quebec City.** Rates in other cities ranged from 2.3% in Montreal and Regina to 4.3% in Saint John. *Source: Statistics Canada*

The Economy

- **Exports of BC products were 13.6% higher this February than in the same month last year.** International shipments of all commodities except industrial goods (-13.2%) were well above 1999 levels. Exports of forest products were up 18.0%, marking the twelfth time in the last 14 months that they have risen at double-digit rates. Energy product exports rose sharply (+34.6%), boosted by higher prices for petroleum products, and international shipments of automotive products (+10.2%), agriculture and fish products (+10.4%), machinery and equipment (+12.7%) and consumer goods (+27.2%) were all higher than in February 1999.

  Canadian exports, increased 13.9% in February despite a slowdown in the automotive products sector (-0.3%), which accounts for more than a quarter (28%) of total exports. Offsetting this were strong gains in exports of machinery and equipment (+16.9%), forest products (+12.0%) and industrial goods (+10.3%). The value of energy product exports was double (+101%) that in February 1999, as Canadian producers received a boost from higher prices for petroleum products. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **All provinces increased their exports in February, but Manitoba (+4.0%), Ontario (+4.9%) and Quebec (+9.7%) lagged behind the rest of the country.** Newfoundland (+95.3%), PEI (+78.6%) and Alberta (+70.3%) posted the strongest gains. Higher energy prices have proved to be a boon for exporters in both Newfoundland and Alberta, where energy products made up about 60% of total exports in February. However, other petroleum and natural gas producing provinces such as Saskatchewan and BC

Report **Education levels of the prime age workforce**

Did you know...
British Columbians have a sweeter tooth than other Canadians. In 1996, residents of the province spent an average of $48 each on confectionery and other sugar preparations–about $18 of which was spent on chocolate bars and filled chocolates. The Canadian average was $39.

have also benefitted from the price increases.
Source: Statistics Canada

- **Shipments of goods manufactured in British Columbia edged down 0.2% (seasonally adjusted) between January and February.** The drop in the value of shipments was due to weakness in the non-durable goods sector, where shipments were off 0.6%, largely as a result of a 2.4% decline in the paper and allied products industry. However, food shipments advanced 0.6% and shipments by producers of refined petroleum and coal (+7.1%) and chemical (+7.0%) products were also up.

  Shipments of durable goods rose modestly (+0.2%) in March. Wood producers increased their shipments by 0.7% while shipments of furniture (+9.6%) and transportation equipment (+16.8%) also rose. However, all other industries in the sector saw their shipments fall in February, at rates ranging from -2.0% for electrical and electronic equipment to -10.5% in the case of fabricated metal producers. Shipments of electrical and electronic products appear to be levelling off after advancing rapidly during the early 1990s.
  Source: Statistics Canada

- **Canadian shipments were down 1.8% in February, as manufacturing activity slowed in three of the four largest provinces.** The main contributors to the decrease were motor vehicles, fabricated metals, and electrical and electronic products. Both Ontario and Quebec were down 2.9%, while BC's shipments fell 0.2%. Alberta, with its heavy concentration in petroleum products, saw the value of shipments rise 2.6%. Shipments were up in every other region except Manitoba (+0.0%) and the North (-0.3%).
  Source: Statistics Canada

- **Wholesale sales in the province decreased 3.8% (seasonally adjusted) between January and February.** Sales were down in seven of Canada's 13 regions, and declined 1.1% at the national level. A 6.2% drop in sales by Canadian lumber wholesalers was one of the main reasons for the decline. The demand for lumber was likely dampened by a slowdown in construction activity in both Canada and the United States.

  Canadian wholesalers of farm machinery and equipment (-17.8%) and hardware, plumbing and heating equipment (-3.8%) saw their sales drop in February. Sales of computers and other electronic equipment were also weak (-1.9%) in that month. Lumber accounts for about 16% of BC's total wholesale sales, while computers and electronics make up about 10% of the total.
  Source: Statistics Canada

Tourism

- **Restaurant, caterer and tavern receipts in the province were 5.2% higher this February than in the same month last year.** This was the first significant improvement in receipts since October of 1998. Receipts had fallen in all but two of the previous 15 months. The general malaise in the province's food services industry during the last year was due to lower sales at drinking establishments and full service restaurants. Limited service restaurants (such as cafeterias and take-outs), food service contractors and caterers fared better, especially during the second half of 1999. In February, receipts at drinking places continued their year-long decline, falling 12.4% below the February 1999 level, but sales at all other food service establishments were up from the previous February. Canadian restaurant, caterer and tavern receipts continued to grow in February, rising 7.0%. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Traveller entries to British Columbia rose 1.7% (seasonally adjusted) in February, as entries from the US recovered (+2.2%) after dipping (-0.5%) in the previous month.** Both same-day (+2.4%) and overnight (+0.9%) travel from the US increased in February. However, entries from overseas were down 1.0%, as Asian (-0.3%) and South Pacific (-4.4%) markets softened. Fewer entries from Hong Kong (-24.2%) and South Korea (-2.5%) were the main reason for the drop in Asian entries. However, entries from Japan were up 2.2%, while Taiwanese entries improved (+13.7%) for the first time in three months. European entries rose 2.9%, boosted by a 5.1% increase in entries from the UK. *Source: BC STATS*

For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

April 20, 2000

Infoline Report:

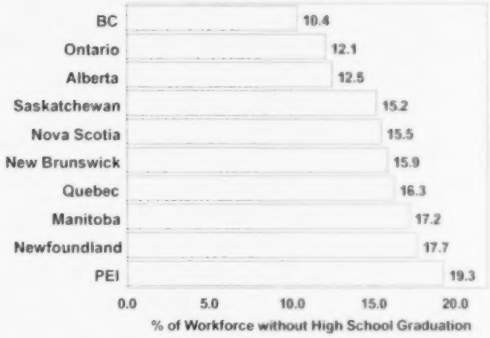
Education levels of the prime age workforce

Contact: Anne Kittredge / (250) 387-0374

Originally published in February 2000 issue, *Earnings & Employment Trends*. Annual subscription: $60 + GST

BC is fortunate to have a relatively well educated workforce. Compared to other provinces, we have the lowest percentage of our prime age workforce[1] without high school completion.

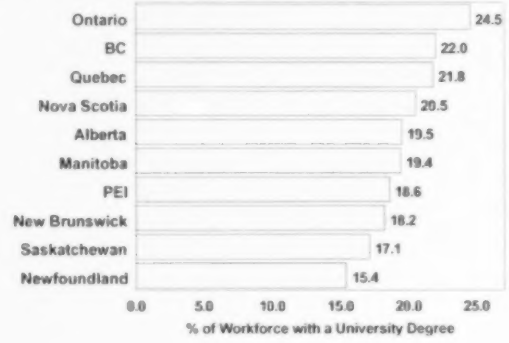
BC has the lowest proportion of its workforce without a high school graduation certificate - 1999



The differential between provinces is quite astounding, with PEI having close to double the incidence of their workforce without high school completion compared to BC.

At the other end of the education spectrum, Ontario prospers. Close to one-quarter of their prime age workforce has a university degree and one in twelve has a graduate degree. BC also does well in recruiting the university educated -- 7 per cent of the workforce have graduate degrees and a further 15 per cent have bachelor degrees. Quebec appears to have the most polarized workforce with a relatively large number holding university degrees alongside a large component with out even high school. Saskatchewan is the least polarized with a relatively good standing with respect to high school graduates but a low incidence of workers with university degrees.

Ontario outshines BC in the relative number of workers who have a university degree - 1999



The whole country has seen an incredible increase in the educational standing of their workforce. For example, in BC, the proportion without high school has decreased by 6 percentage points over the last ten years and those 6 percentage points have almost all been shifted to an improvement in the number of persons with university degrees. In 1990, 16.8 per cent of the prime age BC workforce had a university degree compared to 22.0 per cent in 1999. That represents an increase of 5.2 percentage points. To put the this improvement in historical perspective, over the previous decade, from 1980 to 1989, the increase in the relative number of university degrees rose by only 1.4 percentage points.

All demographic groups seem to have participated in this educational upgrading. Of most interest is the relative achievement of the sexes. While both sexes have been improving their lot, the women of BC have been slowly catching up

[1] *The prime age workforce is defined as the employed, age 25 – 54.*

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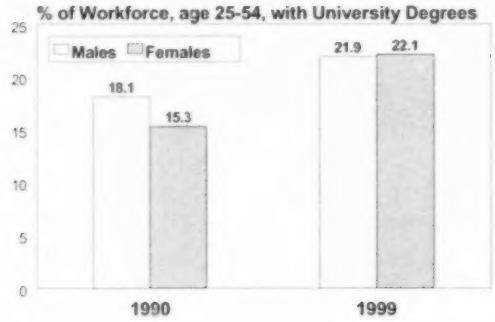
to their male counterparts. And by 1999, for the first time, the proportion of employed women with a university degree surpassed that of men.

Currently, in the BC workforce, more women than men have university degrees .



This is not surprising as the statistics on school participation among 20-24 year olds show that females now slightly outnumber males, whereas in 1990, for every 10 male students, there were only 7 females. However, males, age 25-29, are still slightly more inclined to attend school full-time than their female counterparts. That tendency shows up in the educational attainment figures -- males continue to outperform women in terms of holding the most university graduate degrees.

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Infoline

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/00	% change on one year ago
BC	4,043.7	0.9
Canada	30,606.7	0.9
GDP and INCOME		% change on
(BC - at market prices)	1998	one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	110,948	-0.2
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	99,708	0.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,908	-0.8
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	15,969	-1.6
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Feb	3,339	14.0
Merchandise Exports (raw) Feb	2,398	13.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Jan	2,909	4.6
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Mar '00	one year ago
BC	112.3	1.8
Canada	112.8	3.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Mar '00	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,094	0.6
Employed - BC	1,947	2.4
Unemployed - BC	147	-18.1
		Mar '99
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	7.0	8.6
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	6.8	7.9
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Apr 12/00	Apr 21/99
Prime Business Rate	7.00	6.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	7.70	6.20
- 5 year	8.35	6.70
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Apr 12/00	Apr 21/99
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4622	1.4891
US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)*	0.6834	0.6723
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Mar '00	one year ago
BC	630.34	1.8
Canada	606.52	2.9

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bank-banque-canada.ca/english/wfsgen.htm

Released this week by BC STATS

- Consumer Price Index, March 2000

Next week

- Exports, February 2000
- Business Indicators, April 2000
- Current Statistics, April 2000

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